Software: An International Tie to be Grateful For

I have been extremely fortunate in my lifetime to travel abroad. Europe, Australia, and New Zealand were my destinations. I can remember these trips as if they happened yesterday. From getting my passport to making sure my hair dryer worked overseas, what a thrill it was to prepare for these trips. And from the food, to the people, to the cultures, my experiences on land and sea (i.e., the Great Barrier Reef) were unforgettable.

I also realize that traveling abroad isn't as convenient or even possible without software. Software was an aid to the travel agent that booked my airline, hotel, and tour reservations, and it was an aid to the 747 pilot that flew me halfway around the world. We all know that software is everywhere; it is global. Reflecting on my travels makes me very thankful for this important international tie among countries.

From a defense software community standpoint, software around the world is a critical offensive and defensive element to a country's wartime and peacetime stature. As Americans involved in defense software projects, we work hard to ensure that our armed forces' software intensive systems work worldwide in an effort to outsmart and beat the enemy. But what about our allies, and how they "do" software? All the better if we are interoperable. In this month's issue, Dr. Frederick I. Moxley, Lucien Simon, and Elbert J. Wells present an architectural approach for laying a structural foundation for information interoperability between diverse military information systems, and they discuss why this has been proposed for use throughout NATO.

Just as important as a country's strong defense is their industrial power. Take a look at Australia's information industry in Alastair James' article *Can Australia Improve Its Software Processes?* This country understands the benefits of employing software engineering best practices and processes, but just like any other entity it is hard to put change in place. We know how hard it is for one project or for one organization to embrace change. Is it even possible for a nation to embrace software process improvement all at once?

Also included in this month's issue is a look at India's software industry status. This country has a very strong commitment to software quality as well as to the education and training of software professionals. As Chellam Embar writes in *The State of Software Development in India*, information technology professionals in this country are highly desirable and have more earning power than physicians. Unfortunately, I doubt that this will ever be the case in the United States.

It is refreshing to see that the software best practices that have been created, tried, and proven here in the states are in use throughout the world. It is also very rewarding to be a part of CROSSTALK and to disseminate information on software technologies and best practices worldwide. I encourage our international, on-line readers to send in a letter to the editor or to submit an article. Help us share your software lessons learned and best practices worldwide.

I hope you enjoy this month's issue and bon voyage to wherever your travels may take you.

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